

Message Text

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TAGS: LE, SY, SCUL, MARR, PINT, PINS
SUBJ: DISPUTE BETWEEN GREEK CATHOLIC PATRIARCH AND
FORMER DEPUTY HABIB MUTRAN

REF: DAMASCUS 4035

1. BEGIN SUMMARY. MAXIMOS V. HAKIM, THE GREEK CATHOLIC PATRIARCH, HAS PUBLICLY DEFENDED THE SYRIAN PRESENCE IN LEBANON. FORMER DEPUTY HABIB MUTRAN, A MEMBER OF THE SUPREME COUNCIL OF THE GREEK CATHOLICS IN LEBANON, RESPONDED BY ACCUSING HAKIM OF ADOPTING "POSITIONS CONTRARY TO THE TRUE POSITIONS OF THE GREEK CATHOLICS." END SUMMARY.

2. IN A STATEMENT TO THE PRESS MADE IN DAMASCUS ON JULY 8, GREEK CATHOLIC PATRIARCH MAXIMOS V. HAKIM SAID: "WE CHRISTIAN-
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TIANS STAND AGAINST THE PARTITION OF LEBANON AND DO NOT WISH TO LIVE IN A CHRISTIAN STATE." IN IMPLICIT BUT UNMITIGATED CRITICISM OF THE PHALANGE AND NATIONAL LIBERAL PARTIES, HE ADDED THAT "WE DO NOT CONDONE CONTACT WITH ISRAEL," SINCE ISRAEL "DOES NOT WISH US TO LIVE IN PEACE" WITHOUT THE CREATION OF RELIGIOUS ENCLAVES. HAKIM CALLED FOR UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN SYRIAN AND LEBANON, AND HE PRAISED SYRIAN

FORCES AS PLAYING AN HONORABLE ROLE IN LEBANON.

3. IN REPLY, FORMER LEBANESE DEPUTY HABIB MUTRAN, A MEMBER OF THE SUPREME RELIGIOUS COUNCIL OF THE GREEK CATHOLICS IN LEBANON, CALLED FOR THE REPLACEMENT OF HAKIM. HE SAID THAT MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL HAD CONTACTED THE VATICAN AND ASKED THAT A "LEBANESE" BE APPOINTED TO OVERSEE THE AFFAIRS OF THE GREEK CATHOLIC COMMUNITY HERE. (HAKIM WAS BORN IN EGYPT AND SPENDS MUCH OF HIS TIME IN SYRIA.) MUTRAN ACCUSED HAKIM OF ADOPTING "POSITIONS WHICH ARE CONTRARY TO THE TRUE POSITIONS OF THE GREEK CATHOLICS." MUTRAN ALSO MADE CLEAR HE SUPPORTED THE PHALANGE AND NLP IN THEIR CONFRONTATION WITH THE SYRIANS: "THE UNITY BETWEEN THE GREEK CATHOLICS AND MARONITES IS INSEPARABLE."

4. ON JULY 17 THE GREEK CATHOLIC PATRIARCH ISSUED A LENGTHY STATEMENT IN REPLY TO MUTRAN, WHICH SAID IN PART:

A. THAT THE SUPREME COUNCIL WAS ESTABLISHED BY THE PATRIARCH HIMSELF WITH THE AIM OF UNITING THE GREEK CATHOLIC COMMUNITY, AND THAT THE COUNCIL'S GENERAL ASSEMBLY HAD AGREED THAT IT WOULD NOT RESTRICT THE FREEDOM OF ACTION OF THE PATRIARCH.

B. THAT "ONE OF THE MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL" (I.E. MUTRAN) HAD RAISED THE QUESTION OF WHO SHOULD REPRESENT THE GREEK CATHOLICS IN LEBANON, BUT THAT THE PATRIARCH REMAINED READY LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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TO DISSOLVE THE COUNCIL IF A MAJORITY OF ITS MEMBERS SO WISHED.

C. THAT RELATIONS BETWEEN GREEK CATHOLICS AND MARONITES IN LEBANON WERE EXCELLENT.

5. COMMENT: WE HAVE HEARD A REPORT THAT MAXIMOS HAKIM ISSUED HIS STATEMENT UNDER PRESSURE FROM THE SYRIANS. IN ANY CASE, THIS CONTROVERSY ILLUSTRATES THE DILEMMA IN WHICH SOME OF THE NON-MARONITE CHRISTIAN LEADERS FIND THEMSELVES. ON THE ONE HAND, THEY SYMPATHIZE WITH THE PLIGHT OF THEIR MARONITE CHRISTIAN BRETHREN IN EAST BEIRUT; ON THE OTHER, THEY DO NOT WISH TO BE COMPLETELY IDENTIFIED WITH THE LEADERS OF THE PHALANGE AND NATIONAL LIBERAL PARTIES.

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